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Dynamic and Static Components of Political Support in Britain

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Many studies in British politics in particular and comparative politics more generally have shown a strong relation between personal attributes and voting behavior. Such studies have tended to assume an excessively static picture of party support. "Issue-voting" models, on the other hand, have not adequately accounted for sources of electoral stability. This paper attempts to link structural and political factors in a single model of political preference, and to show the implications of this for the study of broader questions such as why political systems remain stable or change over time. Two routes by which the social structure affects political preferences are posited, estimated, and compared. The strength of the endogenous political component raises the question of the source of stability in the British political system. The proposed model thus estimates the importance of lagged judgments and socialization biases in maintaining a core of "partisan" support for the parties.

Comparative electoral research has repeatedly demonstrated the strong association between socioeconomic attributes such as class, religion, region, language, etc. and voting behavior (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967; Alford, 1963; Rose, 1974). These correlations have provided useful profiles of typical party voters and a mode of comparison for patterns of support across several nations. Some attention has been paid to the behavioral explanations behind these correlations, but all too frequently the different ways in which the social structure influences electoral behavior have been lumped together and empirically ignored. More importantly, while most analyses acknowledge the role of party strategy and voter response—the "endogenous" component of party support—few have attempted to link structural and political factors within the same framework. The result has been that socioeconomic structural explanations of electoral behavior have been excessively static. At the same time, rational, neo-Downsian models which emphasize "issue-voting" have ignored the group processes which contribute to stable electoral cleavages. Most drastically, "normal vote" analysis has actually separated party support into two independent components: stable long term and variable short term forces (Converse, 1966; Hinckley, 1970; Kabaker, 1969).

This paper will consider a model of the British electorate which tries

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to account for both exogenous structural and endogenous political factors. The specification of the proposed model will be discussed in some detail and tested with British survey data. These estimates will then be used to examine (1) the relative impact of the exogenous structural and endogenous political components on partisan preference, and (2) the problem of whether a model which incorporates a significant endogenous component can successfully account for electoral stability.

The Proposed Model

The structure of the proposed theory is as follows:

$$A_0^x = f(U_0^x, P_0) \tag{1}$$

$$A_t^x = f(U_t^x, P_t, A_{t-1}^x) \tag{2}$$

$$U_t^x = f(P_t, Z) \tag{3}$$

where

A_0^x = the assessment of party x at the time of entry into the electorate
A_t^x = the assessment of party x at time t
A_{t-1}^x = the assessment of party x at time $t-1$
P_o = background and family socialization pressures at the time of entry into the electorate
P_t = background and family socialization pressures at time t
U_0^x = the utility derived from party x at time of entry into the electorate
U_{t-1}^x = the utility derived from party x at time $t-1$
U_t^x = the utility derived from party x at time t
Z = other exogenous attitude determinations

At the moment of entry into the electorate, this model suggests that an individual's assessment of party x will be a function of the perceived utility of that party's policies and of background factors. The variable P_0 represents socialization components such as family and social peer group acceptance which create in an individual a predisposition towards one party apart from considerations of issue proximity. In England, the variable P_0 might

be represented by class and family membership, but in other countries, membership in a religious, ethnic, agrarian, or linguistic group may create the comparable social pressure. These conformity effects can be explained within either a rational-utilitarian or sociological framework. The Downsian might want to call them nonissue utilities since there can be high costs to holding preferences which are different from those of one's parents, peers, or coworkers and benefits to be derived in terms of esteem and respect from conformity. From a social-psychological standpoint, these pressures can simply be explained as role expectations. However described, the first way in which the social structure influences political preferences in this model is through the creation of group loyalties and pressures independent of an individual's attitudes.

It is also possible that background factors are important in the transmission of information and the formulation of political attitudes. Clearly, a variety of factors affect and change individual attitudes, but one important source is that an individual's position in the socioeconomic structure causes that person to assess the impact of policies on his utility from a different perspective than a person in another socioeconomic situation. To take an obvious example, the interests of a worker in a steel mill are affected differently by a deflationary, high unemployment policy than are those of a pensioner on a fixed income. At the same time, the formulation of opinions is more complex than a simple identification with material interest. Most troublesome is the possibility that parties through the emphasis of their platforms and propaganda influence individual attitudes. While there is only suggestive evidence of this in the British case (Blumler and McQuail, 1968), more systematic evidence from American data shows that party identification has a discernible causal impact on issue evaluations, even though less than the impact of either exogenous factors on issues or of issue evaluations on party identification itself (Jackson, 1975, pp. 161–185). It is also likely that television and the press partly determine as well as reinforce opinion, particularly in the cases of highly media-exposed, uncertain or "weakly motivated" individuals (Blumler and McQuail, 1968), and on issues about which the public has little direct knowledge (Lippman, 1922; Ure, 1968). The implication is that individual preferences are not fixed, but vary by some function involving self-interest, exposure to the media, personality, and a stochastic error component.

While social structure is related to attitude formation, the impact of changes in the social structure on party preferences is by no means simple. This is so because party preferences will vary with the perceived proximity of individual attitudes to party positions and will not depend on individual

issue attitudes alone. If Q is defined as a vector of individual i's preferred positions on a set of issues $q_{i1}, \ldots, x_{in}$, and X is a vector of perceived party positions $x_{i1}, \ldots, x_{in}$, then the value of U_t^x will be greatest when $Q = X$. The common mode of expressing the utility of party preference in cases where $Q \neq X$ is the loss formulation. The logic behind the loss formulation has been exhaustively discussed elsewhere and need not be replicated in great detail here (Riker and Ordeshook, 1968; Davis et al., 1970). Briefly, this concept suggests that voters are typically confronted with alternatives which are less than ideal. This can be expressed as:

$$U_t^x = I - L_t^x$$

U_t^x is the utility to individual i from party x's policies at time t
I is the normalized value of U_t^x when $Q = X$
L_t^x is the loss to individual i at time t from party x

The problem which confronts the voter is choosing that alternative with the minimal loss. In early spatial models, the calculation of loss was usually given a quadratic form:

$$L_t^x = (Q - X)'\mathbf{A}(Q - X)$$

where

$\mathbf{A}$ is a matrix of weights assigned to each issue by the voter
Q is the vector of preferred positions
X is the vector of party positions

An individual with no predispositions or biases will prefer party x to party y if $U_t^x > U_t^y$ implying that $L_t^x > L_t^y$.

A change in an individual's socioeconomic position may alter that person's views on a set of issues X or on the importance he/she assigns to those issues, but any corresponding increase or decrease in perceived utility loss will depend on Q as well. This demonstrates an important distinction: the causal path of the social structure on party preferences through role expectations is direct, while the impact of social structure on party preferences through attitudes is conditional on the behavior of other actors in the political system. It is possible for an individual to change his/her issue position, but experience no change in partisan evaluation simply because the position of the party shifted in the same direction, or for an individual to keep the same issue position but still experience an increase in loss, because the party position shifted in the opposite direction. The wider

implication is that by incorporating an endogenous political component, a model of electoral choice can account for changes in the distribution of party support in the absence of cataclysmic social change, or, for that matter, can account for stability in the distribution of party support despite measurable social mobility, economic growth, or demographic shifts. The former is particularly important for the study of British politics since the decline of major party support and the rise in the number of Liberals and abstainers in the period from 1964 to 1974 cannot be attributed to any significant change in the social structure (Crewe, 1974). In models that rely exclusively on static socialization components, the forces of habit and conformity are so great that the political system automatically gravitates to a pattern of stable support. Only major social or international upheaval can jar the system from its equilibrium, and then once again gravitation towards stability begins. In spatial models, support is affected and maintained by party policies and behavior in office; it is not automatic, and can be augmented or dissipated by political strategy. Since political change in the proposed model can come endogenously from within the political system as well as exogenously from the social structure or international system, no single cataclysmic trauma need precede a realignment in the electoral system. This will hopefully provide a more flexible explanation of political change, capable of accounting for anomalies in more static theories such as the Butler-Stokes model.

Political Stability and Endogenous Components

If the pitfall of socialization models has been an excessive emphasis on the structural determinants of individual preferences, early rational theories were less able to account for stable group and personal party loyalties. Political scientists have discovered that party preferences tend to be more stable than attitudes and that some individuals are more immune than others to changes in their voting behavior (Campbell et al., 1964; Butler and Stokes, 1974). One interpretation of the party identification literature is that voters enter an electoral period with biases accumulated from the past, and that these biases contribute to the overall stability of the electoral system. In the framework of a rational paradigm, this amounts to saying that individuals utilize information and judgments formed at earlier periods as well as current knowledge when making choices. The proposed model must, therefore, incorporate the notion of partisanship and explain the relationship between adjusting and lagged components of voting decisions.

A simple way to represent the effect of past issue evaluations is to assume a geometrically declining impact over time. The assessment of party x at time t can be expressed as a weighted function of issue evaluations from the voter's childhood to the present:

$$A_t^x = B_0 + B_1U_t^x + B_2U_{t-1}^x + \ldots + e_t$$

By assuming that the weight of an issue evaluation declines geometrically over time starting at the first lag, we can express the coefficients $B_2 \ldots B_n$ as products of B_1 and some lag operator λ:

$$B_2 = \lambda B_1, B_3 = \lambda^2 B_1, B_4 = \lambda^3 B_1, \text{ etc. } 0 < \lambda < 1$$

The original expression can be rewritten as:

$$A_t^x = B_0 + B_1U_t^x + \lambda B_1U_{t-1}^x + \lambda^2 B_1U_{t-2}^x + \ldots + e_t$$

Similarly, the assessment at $t - 1$ can be expressed as:

$$A_{t-1}^x = B_0 + B_1U_{t-1}^x + \lambda B_1U_{t-2}^x + \lambda^2 B_1U_{t-3}^x + \ldots + e_{t-1}$$

Discounting the previous assessment involves weighting the expression for A_{t-1} by the lag operator:

$$\lambda A_{t-1}^x = B_0 + \lambda B_1U_{t-1}^x + \lambda^2 B_1U_{t-2}^x + \ldots + \lambda e_{t-1}$$

The difference between the two expressions will be:

$$A_t^x - \lambda A_{t-1}^x = B_0(1 - \lambda) + B_1U_t^x + (e_t - \lambda e_{t-1})$$

$$A_t^x = B_0(1 - \lambda) + B_1U_t^x + \lambda A_{t-1}^x + (e_t - \lambda e_{t-1})$$

This model is known as a Koyck lag (Theil, 1971, p. 260). The final equation implies that an individual's assessment at t of party x will be a function of some constant term, issue evaluations at t and past issue evaluations discounted by some weight λ. The same sort of reasoning can be extended to include the direct background effects posited earlier. If the effect of class, peer group, or family pressures can be said to decline geometrically over time, the new expression will be:

$$A_t^x = B_0(1 - \lambda) + B_1U_t^x + B_2P_t + \lambda A_{t-1}^x + (e_t - \lambda e_{t-1})$$

The one clear advantage of this model is that it permits the estimation of

the effect of past evaluations where the direct insertion of lagged issue variables into the equation would be difficult due to the noncomparability of issue questions over time, multicollinearity, and the like.

Theories of socialization also demonstrate that party evaluations begin at some point in childhood rather than starting from a point of indifference and impartiality with each election, but imply falsely that a political preference at any point in time is simply the earlier judgment plus a random error component (Butler and Stokes, 1974, pp. 33–46):

$$A_t^x = A_0^x + e$$

The assumption in theories of socialization that $A_t^x = A_0^x + e$ would hold true if U_0^x did not change (since it is quite plausible to assume that $P_o = P_t$), or at least fluctuated randomly, such that $E(U_t^x) = U_0^x$. If, on the other hand, $E(U_t^x) \neq U_0^x$ then the assumption will not hold. It is of course possible that for some individuals fluctuations of issue distance are random and the cumulative effect of these changes is zero. However, if we believe that changes in U_t^x are responses to the relative distance from party policies, and that party strategy itself is not purely random, then we can expect to find nonrandom changes in individual party preferences: that is to say, the continuity and trend of party policies and economic conditions ought to be reflected in party evaluations.

The notion of lagged assessment has important implications for the theory of the rational voter. A voter is said to be rational when he/she responds to government policies—subject to the constraints of information —with an appropriate recalculation of preference. An individual at time t with a high previous assessment of party x and a low previous assessment of party y will not change the order of his previous assessment unless there has been a sufficient shift in the differential loss in the period $t - 1$ to t. It is possible therefore for a rational voter to continue preferring party x even though the loss in the last electoral period from party y was slightly less than the loss from party x. In this sense, the lagged assessment variable resembles the concept of partisan self-image in the analysis of Butler and Stokes and that of party identification in the American voting literature. If A_{t-1}^x were to reach a sufficiently high level, the marginal impact of recent utility adjustments would be quite small. A high assessment of party x as the result of reinforcing past utility calculations and nonspatial predispositions could then be defined as a high level of partisanship. The voter's probability of voting for party x would be very high: the pattern of voting over time would be stable and small changes in evaluations would not be reflected in voting behavior.

To sum up, there are three sources of stability in the proposed model: (1) The solidity of the underlying social structure will contribute to stable individual attitudes over time. This point should be viewed with some caution, however, since any model of attitudes must be more complex than a simple identification of socioeconomic self-interest and because the proximity of individual attitudes to the parties in the electoral system will depend on the behavior and statements of the parties in and out of office. (2) Vote maximizing party behavior is, therefore, the second source of stability in the proposed model in the sense that parties will shift their positions in response to change in the underlying distribution of opinions. (3) Finally, the accumulation of background biases as well as information and opinions acquired over the years serves as a buffer against the insecurity of instantaneous changes in voter affiliations. The fact that parties can draw on the accumulated credit of their partisans gives them a predictable base of support to build on.

The Specification of the Model

It is possible to test the proposed model with panel data collected in Britain between 1970 and 1974.[1] As developed earlier, the specification of the model will be:

$$A^x_{74} = B_0 + B_1C + B_2F + B_3U^x_{74} + B^x_4A_{70} + e_{74}$$

where

- A^x_{74} is the assessment of the Conservative and Labour parties in 1974 as measured by a feeling thermometer score
- C is the respondent's class as measured by an occupation scale
- F is the father's partisan preference weighted by the intensity of his political preference
- U^x_{74} is the respondent's issue evaluation score in 1974
- A^x_{70} is the assessment of the Conservative and Labour parties in 1970 again measured by a feeling thermometer

This is the same equation as before except that class and family are specifically posited as the background factors. To reiterate an earlier interpretation

[1] The data for this study is a panel initiated by Butler and Stokes in 1970 and continued by the University of Essex under the direction of Ivor Crewe and Bo Sarlvik in 1974. These scholars are, of course, not responsible for the views and analysis presented in this article.

of this equation, a person's assessment in 1974 wil be a function of issue evaluations in 1974, class and family role expectations in 1974, and a discounted 1970 assessment representing past issue evaluations and background factors. In addition to their direct effects, the model also suggests that class and family will have an indirect effect on party assessment through a person's issue calculations:

$$U^x_{74} = f(F,C,Z)$$

This will be handled by treating U^x_{74} as an endogenous variable and creating an instrument for it from the variables F, C and other socioeconomic data Z.[2]

The variables in the estimated equations are:

(1) A^x_{74}, A^x_{70}: The proxies for the party assessment variables are the respondent's feeling thermometers of the Conservative and Labour parties. These variables take on values between 0 and 10.

(2) C: The class measure is the respondent's occupation as represented by an interval scaling (1, .5, 0, —.5, —1) of the standard A, B, C_1, C_2, D, E classification.[3]

(3) F: The family variable is the father's partisan affiliation weighted by a dummy measuring the importance of politics to the father. The reasoning behind the weighting is that family pressures will not only vary with the direction but the intensity of parental partisanship as well.

[2] The instruments for these equations are as follows: dummies for living in Scotland, Wales, the North, the South, the Midlands; dummies for the age cohort groups 65 and over, 51–65, 44–51, 18–31; dummies for home ownership, trade union membership, being self-employed, being unemployed, immigrants living in the neighborhood, unemployment in the surrounding area, level of education, and newspaper read; interval class variable; income; father's partisanship. The procedure employed computes the instruments in one step from the cross-products matrix so that any estimation of the first stage must be undertaken separately. This was done, and the R squares of these equations relating individual issue attitudes to sociodemographic variables range from a low of .11 in the taxation equation to a high of .42 for immigration. The level of correlation between the instruments and the endogenous variables will affect the efficiency but not the consistency of the estimates.

[3] The meaning of these categories is as follows: A—higher managerial or professional; B—lower managerial or administrative; C_1—skilled and lower nonmanual; C_2—skilled manual; D—unskilled manual; E—residual category, on pension or state benefit.

(4) U^x_{74}: The utility of a party's policies will depend on the comparative distance of party positions from the voter's ideal points. This can be represented as

$$U^x_{74} = L^y_{74} - L^x_{74}.$$

The utility of party x's policies will be greater for voter i when

$$L^y_{74} > L^x_{74}:$$

i.e. when the loss or distance of party y's policies exceeds the loss or distance from party x's. Loss in turn is defined as the squared difference between the respondent's own position and the perceived party position weighted by a salience dummy.[4] The sum of differences across a set of issues yields a composite loss score. The quadratic form of the loss variables is a common assumption in spatial theory and is used here to remain as faithful as possible to rational voter theory.[5]

[4] The issue positions of the respondents and the parties are first coded as interval variables (1,.5,0,—.5,—1). There are important reasons to worry about interval codings (Grether, 1976), but I would argue here that (1) the wording of the issue responses convey the impression of equal distance between issue positions and (2) early experiments with dummy codings seem to indicate that the interval codings actually served to increase the t-statistics and the R-squares.

[5] The variables included in the summary measure are the Common Market, nationalization, and immigration: the final score is then averaged by the number of issues (3). The prices and strikes variables followed a slightly modified form. Downs argued that where an issue involved the relative competence of two opposing parties rather than some clearly defined ideological difference, the voter had to calculate his current party differential on the basis of his comparative assessment of how the government handled the particular problem in question and his expectation of how the opposition party would have handled the problem had it been in office (Downs, 1957, pp. 36–50). Economic questions are often thought to fall into this valence category (Butler and Stokes, 1974, pp. 238–242). It seemed useful, therefore, to construct the prices and strikes variables in a manner that would take into account the respondent's differential assessments and expectations. The 1974 questionnaire asked the respondents to rate how well the Conservative Government handled prices and strikes in its four years in office, and how well they thought the Labour Party would have handled the problem had it been in office during this period. These responses were then combined to give the judged utility difference:

In the estimation of the model, class and family were treated as exogenous while the issue evaluation and lagged assessment variables are treated as endogenous. The justification for creating an instrument for U^x_{74} follows from the discussion earlier about the indirect effects of background factors and also from the obvious possibility that measured proximity could be primarily the result of the respondent making preferred party position and revealed personal positions on the issues cognitively consistent, i.e. a simultaneous equation bias. The lagged feeling thermometer is also treated as an endogenous variable since there is good reason to expect correlation between the error term of the implicit equation for the lagged assessment and unspecified explanatory factors which fall into the error term of the final question. As it is shown in standard econometric texts, creating an instrument for the lagged endogenous variable from exogenous variables which are correlated with the endogenous variable but uncorrelated with the error term of the equation will produce consistent estimates (Theil, 1971; Jackson and Hanushek, 1977).

The results of the estimations are shown in Table 1. In the Conservative equation, the family, lagged assessment, and issue evaluation variables are statistically significant with the correct signs. Only the class variable is insignificant, which is plausible given that the Conservative party has consciously cultivated a more ecumenical appeal than the Labour party and has, on average, been able to capture more than one-third of the working

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$$\text{Strikes} = a_{is}\,(p^{\text{Con}}_{is} - p^{\text{Lab}}_{is})$$

$$\text{Prices} = a_{ir}\,(p^{\text{Con}}_{ir} - p^{\text{Lab}}_{ir})$$

where

$p^{\text{Con}}_{is}, p^{\text{Con}}_{ir}$ are the respondent's assessments of how well the Conservatives handled prices (r) and strikes (s)

$p^{\text{Lab}}_{is}, p^{\text{Lab}}_{ir}$ are the respondent's assessments of how well the Labour Party would have handled prices (r) and strikes (s)

a_{is}, a_{ir} are the salience weights.

These two basic forms of information about the voter's attitudes (i.e. valence and position summary measures) are estimated separately and the combined in a manner such that we expect a positive coefficient for the issue evaluation measure in the Conservative equation and a negative coefficient for that in the Labour equation, but in both cases the implication is that as losses decrease on the three position issues and the differential increases on the valence (i.e. prices and strikes) issues, the party assessment will rise.

TABLE 1

A Test of the Model in Britain: 1970–74

	A_{74}^{Con}	A_{74}^{Lab}
A_{70}^{Con}	.49*	—
	(.10)	
A_{70}^{Lab}	—	.25*
		(.10)
U_{74}^{x}	2.00*	—3.98*
	(.71)	(.82)
C	.09	—.41*
	(.11)	(.12)
F	.31*	—.36*
	(.11)	(.13)
Constant	2.75	4.46
R^2	.48	.43
SE	1.88	2.05

* Significant at .05

class vote. In the Labour equation all the parameters are significant including class. It is interesting to note that the coefficient on the lagged Conservative component is considerably larger than in the Labour case. There are several plausible explanations for this, including the fact that Conservative voters tend to be older than their Labour counterparts, and the possibility that voters weigh the promises of opposition parties more heavily. No attempt was made to pursue these points further, but they may deserve future consideration.

The Relative Impact of Background and Issue Variables

It was argued earlier that one must distinguish structural exogenous and political endogenous change. The former means that changes in group membership will alter group loyalties, as in the case of an individual who moves from a blue collar to a white collar job. The direct effect of such social mobility as estimated in the equation is .31 in the Conservative case and .36 in the Labour case. Of course, the shift in occupation might also affect attitudes on certain issues and, assuming no corresponding change in party position, this might change the comparative issue evaluation. Class,

for example, was found to be significantly related to all issues except immigration in 1974.[6] Still, it is important to bear in mind that the indirect effect of background through issues is less deterministic than the direct effect. A significant amount of social mobility across the population might soften traditional attitudes toward issues like nationalization or social services, but a careful monitoring of the polls might cause the parties to adapt their positions accordingly. Conversely, an individual who experiences no social mobility may perceive an increase in loss if the party changes its position in response to other voters, party activists, and the like. In short, the direct effects of structural change will be more obvious and predictable than the indirect effects through issue attitudes.

This is important because the second observation to be drawn from these estimations is that the British electorate is extremely issue responsive: that is, small variations in issue proximity can produce important differences in party evaluations. The maximum effect of only one issue deemed salient by the respondent as coded and using the estimated coefficients would be 2.26 on the scale of 0 to 10 measuring the voter's Conservative feeling thermometer rating. This would be the equivalent, for example, of a voter who favored further denationalization of British industries, who perceived that the Conservatives stood for further denationalization and that the Labour party stood for further nationalization, and who felt that the issue was very important. A less extreme disagreement would be a voter who favored nationalization of fewer industries, who perceived that the Conservatives held the same position but that the Labour party stood for no denationalizations and no new nationalizations, and who felt that the issue was very important. The estimated increment to the Conservative feeling thermometer would in this instance be .56.

The implication of issue responsiveness is very important for models of the British electorate because it indicates that a significant variability in party evaluations—and hence a significant variability in voting behavior—can result from changes in issue proximity. Since socioeconomic change is not a necessary condition for shifts in issue evaluations, it is possible to account for realignments in individual or aggregate preferences in the absence of social mobility or major socioeconomic disruptions: changes in public opinion or in perceived party policies for whatever reasons can cause disruptions in the prevailing patterns of partisan support. These pat-

[6] The coefficients relating class to various issues are as follows: .16 (.03) Prices; .05 (.01) Taxation; .23 (.01) EEC; .23 (.04) Strikes; .03 (.01) Nationalization; and .01 (.01) Immigration.

terns of partisan support are the result of a dynamic interaction between the parties and public opinion: the study of realignments and dealignments ought to focus on causes which emerge from this policy nexus.

The Stability of Modeled Preferences

Can a model which depends so heavily on endogenous political factors successfully explain electoral stability? In addition to the stabilizing effects of party behavior and the social structure, it has been argued that voters enter an electoral period with predispositions as the result of background factors and accumulated judgments. In this sense, voters are in varying degrees "partisan" and their choices at time t are made with different amounts of bias. As the biases build, voters will be less responsive to current party strategy and policies and will resemble what political scientists call party identifiers.

This point can be easily illustrated by a simulation using the estimated coefficients again. Table 2 shows the predicted scores of a middle class individual with a Tory background given the 1970 assessment scores displayed in the far left-hand column. Thus, if an individual assessed the Conservatives at 9 and the Labour party at 1 on the feeling thermometer in 1970, the predicted Conservative score holding issue evaluations con-

TABLE 2

A Simulation of Lagged Partisanship for a Middle Class Individual from a Tory Background

	A_{74}^{Con}	A_{74}^{Lab}
$A_{70} = 10$	8.05	6.96
9	7.56	6.71
8	7.07	6.46
7	6.58	6.21
6	6.09	5.96
5	5.60	5.71
4	5.11	5.46
3	4.62	5.21
2	4.13	4.96
1	3.64	4.71
0	3.15	4.46

TABLE 3

Correspondence Between Feeling Thermometer and Vote, 1970

Feeling Thermometer Level	Percentage Voting Labour	Percentage Voting Conservative
10	84.1	79.7
9	72.5	75.3
8	53.8	74.1
7	65.1	54.4
6	27.2	29.4
5	8.5	4.4
4	1.5	2.1
3	1.0	0
2	1.4	0
1	0	3.7

stant would be 7.56 and the Labour score would be 4.71. Remembering that the maximum disagreement for a salient issue yields a change of 2.26 in the Conservative evaluation, a reversal of Conservative and Labour preferences in this case would require substantial disagreements with the Conservatives on several salient issues. Since we must presume that this individual was previously quite close to the Conservatives—a score of nine implies considerable proximity to the Conservatives in 1970—it is fair to conclude that a shift in the order of preference for this individual would require an almost inconceivable change in attitude orientation. Small disutilities from or indifference to the most recent Conservative policies would not significantly affect the preferences or behavior of this person. Consequently, this voter will exhibit the stable preferences and behavior of the so-called party identifier.

The predisposition component can also be found for less extreme cases (shown in Table 2). The model predicts quite plausibly that individuals with low or indifferent previous assessments will change the order of their preferences in response to small changes in opinion. Such individuals resemble those who have traditionally been called "independents" in American voting studies and "non-identifiers" by Butler and Stokes. Their preferences will in general be less stable, and they will have a higher propensity to switch their vote or abstain.

The estimations show that as the margin of previous assessment increases, a greater amount of contradictory information in the most recent period will be needed to shift the order of an individual's preference. The limitations on change—particularly at the highest levels of partisanship—seem even more significant when it is recalled that (1) individuals are not likely to feel strongly or be informed about all issues, (2) that attitudes at any time t are unlikely to be different on every single issue from what they were at time $t - 1$, and that, therefore, (3) any shift in attitudes sufficient to alter a high previous differential would involve an almost inconceivable reversal of attitudes. On the other hand, it is not difficult to see why there might be considerable volatility in the preferences of individuals in the middle ranges. Clearly, individuals are shown to have different degrees of vulnerability to change.

This analysis resists the temptation of classifying individuals into discrete categories although it makes the distinction between levels of partisanship. Partisanship is likened to a predetermined bias having the form of a continuous probability distribution with different likelihoods of behavior at various points along the continuum rather than as identifiably distinct qualitative states.

Consider Table 3, which shows the frequency with which individuals who had the feeling thermometer scores in the left-hand column voted for the Conservative and Labour parties in 1970. The fact that individuals who assessed a party at 10 do not vote for that party 100 percent of the time reflects the calculus by which individuals translate their preferences into behavior; such a calculus will involve the relative assessment of various alternatives and the individual's expectations of affecting the outcome. Still, the point is that the behavior of individuals with strong predispositions will be less affected by contradictory new information than will those at middle levels of partisanship. It can be readily seen that the behavior of a voter at the partisan level of 6 or 7 will be more likely to change in response to policy disagreements than will the behavior of those at the upper or lower end of the scale. Thus, not only do partisan biases make it less likely that individuals will have substantial disagreements with their normal partisan preferences, but the impact of such disagreements on their behavior will vary inversely with the strength of their biases (positive or negative).

Conclusion

Clearly, it is possible to link socioeconomic and political components successfully in a single model of voter choice. It has been proven that the

endogenous evaluation component has a significant impact on partisan evaluations in Great Britain. This raises the possibility that party systems can change as the result of factors within the political system: in particular, as the result of responses to party strategy and performance. The implication is that macropolitical models need not depend so heavily on theories of social determinism. At the same time, the insights about group pressures and individual biases which political scientists have borrowed from psychology and sociology need not be discarded entirely. Rather, it is possible to incorporate them into the general model and use them to help account for stability within the political system.

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